CAUSES OF BLINDNESS IN MISSOURI AND IN ST. LOUIS

Dr. H. D. Lamb

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CAUSES OF BLINDNESS IN MISSOURI AND IN ST. LOUIS.

By Dr. H. D. LAMB, St. Louis, Mo.

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By Dr. H. D. LAMB, St. Louis, Mo.

IT will be remembered that the granting of a pension of $25.00 a month to the adult blind in Missouri was begun in 1921. The Fifty-first General Assembly of Missouri in 1921 established the visual limit at $\frac{20}{450}$, that is no one with vision better than $\frac{20}{450}$ was eligible to receive the pension. Within this limit there were examined and admitted to the pension-rolls about 6,000 adult blind. This number was about twice as many as could be paid from the tax-money available. It was found that about one-half of these applicants had vision no greater than light perception. Accordingly in 1923 the Fifty-second General Assembly changed the limit of vision to light perception. Every blind pensioner was RE-EXAMINED BY AN EYE-SPECIALIST ONLY. The following tables are therefore the findings in summary among blind adult applicants for the pension, BASED ENTIRELY ON NEW EXAMINATIONS begun about June 1, 1923. About two-thirds the number listed in the following tables are eligible and receive the pension. For statistical purposes, there is no reason to exclude the findings among ineligible applicants. We are interested in obtaining as many examinations of blind individuals as possible made by specialists.

Because a single eye is blinded in many cases from a different cause from what has cost the sight of the fellow-eye, it becomes necessary to list cases under each cause of blindness as bilateral and unilateral cases. (Tables No. 1 and No. 4.)

For the ages of the blind in Missouri, I have listed 5392 persons out of the total 5552 individuals; the ages of the remaining 160 were not easily available.

TABLE No. I.—CAUSES OF BLINDNESS IN MISSOURI.

Causes	*Persons blinded in both eyes* (*No.*)	*Single eyes blinded* (*No.*)	*Eyes in total* (*No.*)	*Cause of blindness* (*Per cent*)
Trachoma	1380	76	2836	25.5%
Cataract	915	275	2105	19.0%
Optic atrophy	589	95	1273	11.5%
Glaucoma	421	84	926	8.3%
Trauma	175	335	685	6.1%
Corneal ulceration	200	197	597	5.3%
Uveitis	210	159	579	5.2%
Choroiditis and chorioretinitis.	163	44	370	3.3%
Ophthalmia neonatorum	99	5	203	1.8%
Retinal degeneration	48	5	101	0.9%
Myopia	38	16	91	0.8%
Optic neuritis	29	5	63	0.6%
Retinal detachment	15	19	49	0.4%
Congenital cataract	18	3	39	0.4%
Hydrophthalmus	9	2	20	0.2%
Microphthalmus	6	1	13	0.1%
Amblyopia ex anopsia		8	8	0.1%
Keratoconus	2		4	0.05%
Miscellaneous	3		6	0.05%
Fundus condition (obscured by lens changes)	61	38	129	1.5%
No diagnosis	323	329	975	8.9%
Totals	4704	1696	11,104	100.00%

Total number of persons..... 5552

NUMBER OF BLIND ADULTS IN MISSOURI WITH VISION OF 0 AND LIGHT PERCEPTION..... 3630 65.4%

TABLE No. II.—AGES OF BLIND IN MISSOURI.

Ages	*Number of cases*	*Percentage of cases*
From 20 to 30 years	219	4.1%
From 30 to 40 years	411	7.6%
From 40 to 50 years	610	11.3%
From 50 to 60 years	818	15.2%
From 60 to 70 years	1248	23.1%
From 70 to 80 years	1318	24.4%
From 80 to 90 years	636	11.8%
From 90 to 100 years	122	2.3%
From 100 & over	10	0.2%
Totals	5392	100.0%

TABLE No. III.—SEX OF BLIND IN MISSOURI.

Sex	*Number of cases*	*Percentage of cases*
Males	2979	53.7%
Females	2573	46.3%
Totals	5552	100.0%

TABLE No. IV.—CAUSES OF BLINDNESS IN ST. LOUIS.

Causes	*Persons blinded in both eyes* (*No.*)	*Single eyes blinded* (*No.*)	*Eyes in total* (*No.*)	*Cause of blindness* (*Per cent*)
Optic atrophy	147	1	295	23.1%
Glaucoma	99	4	202	15.8%
Uveitis	61	8	130	10.1
Corneal ulceration	55	7	117	9.1
Cataract	49	7	105	8.2
Simple trauma	24	8	56	4.4
Trauma with sympathetic ophthalmia	12		24	1.9
Pigmentary degenerations of retina	35	1	71	5.6
Ophthalmia neonatorum	29		58	4.6
Trachoma	22	3	47	3.7
Chorioretinitis	14	3	31	2.4
Congenital malformations	14	1	29	2.3
Progressive myopia	12	4	28	2.2
Retinal detachment	5	4	14	1.1
Congenital cataract	6		12	1.0
Acid, lime and lye burns	6		12	1.0
Essential shrinking of conjunctiva	4		8	0.6
Parenchymatous keratitis	3		6	0.5
Optic neuritis	2		4	0.3
Amblyopia ex anopsia		4	4	0.3
Wood alcohol	1		2	0.2
Miscellaneous causes	4	2	10	0.8
Fundus condition (obscured by lens changes)	3	1	7	0.5
No diagnosis		4	4	0.3
Totals	607	62	1276	100.0%

638 Individuals in all

We have never published any separate statistics on blindness for the city of St. Louis. It is interesting however to compare the causes of blindness for this large city with those of the entire state.

TABLE No. V.—VISION OF BLIND IN ST. LOUIS.

Vision	*Number of cases*	*Percentage of cases*
0 and light perception	465	72.9%
Light perception to 10/450	131	20.5
10/450 to 20/450	42	6.6
Totals	638	100.0%

TABLE No. VI.—AGES OF BLIND IN ST. LOUIS.

Age	*Number of cases*	*Percentage of cases*
From 20 to 30 years	48	7.5%
From 30 to 40 years	72	11.3
From 40 to 50 years	100	15.7
From 50 to 60 years	127	19.9
From 60 to 70 years	138	21.5
From 70 to 80 years	108	17.0
From 80 to 90 years	36	5.7
From 90 to 100 years	9	1.4
Totals	638	100.0%

TABLE No. VII.—SEX OF BLIND IN ST. LOUIS.

Sex	*Number of cases*	*Percentage of cases*
Male	345	54.1%
Females	293	45.9
Totals	638	100.0%

In brief, the striking difference between the causes of blindness for the entire state as compared with those for St. Louis is

in the amount of trachoma. The greatest single cause of blindness (25.5%) in the entire state, trachoma as a cause of blindness in St. Louis ranks ninth (3.7%). Trachoma is therefore a rural disease because of inadequate ocular prophylaxis and treatment in the country districts.

One would expect optic atrophy to be much more prevalent in St. Louis (23.1%) than over the entire state (11.5%) because syphilis, the predominant cause of optic atrophy is more common in the big cities than in the rural places.

That there is more blindness from glaucoma in St. Louis (15.8%) than in the entire state (8.3%) is surprising and hard to believe. It can only mean that there is more glaucoma in St. Louis than generally over the state.

The reasons for drawing up and publishing another set of statistics for Missouri are first that the above figures are based throughout on fresh or new examinations of each applicant's eyes and secondly, that these new examinations were all made by eye specialists. These figures correspond well with the former statistics of blindness in Missouri published in the Journal of Missouri State Medical Association for May, 1926.

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